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SOME POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ETHICAL
PLURALISM

IN a recent article,¹ I endeavored to show that the moral life is essentially pluralistic, that the goods available to us in this world in which we find ourselves are widely various, often incompatible, and in many cases incommensurable, and that consequently the choices which in practise we are forced to make are rather personal options than discoveries of eternal principles. It was maintained that ethical theory has usually been too pious in its deference to monistic philosophy, and that a first-hand examination of concrete human affairs, of the actual method whereby pressing problems are solved, compels a frank recognition of the arbitrary character of moral codes and programmes. However objective and "natural" moral distinctions and values are, none the less any selection between alternative goods and any determination between alternative courses of action are conventional to groups or peculiar to individuals. Failure to realize the pluralistic nature of the moral life is the occasion of much strife and social discord, and hence of an unnecessarily large amount of moral evil.

The following paper seeks to carry further the analysis which in that paper was begun. The attempt is here made to follow out the import of the position there set forth, to point out its significance for the social life of men, for their association within groups, for the coexistence of many and sometimes rival groups, and for the relations of different nations in a world which, in spite of antagonisms and devastating wars, is growing to be ever more closely bound together in politics, commerce, and culture. It is no new thing for philosophy to dwell upon the analogies between the excellent man and the perfect state. To understand the one is to be well on the way to understanding the other. Perhaps we can not with Plato divide human nature into the same number of mental faculties as we find social classes in our city; and perhaps we can not with James Mill generalize out psychology into a politics. But it is probably safe to say that no theory of morals amounts to much unless it illuminates social problems. Society can be properly ordered only

¹ This JOURNAL, Vol. XVII, No. 21.

through due consideration to the achievement of goods by the individuals of which society is composed. Hence the social and political implications of the theory of pluralism in ethics should afford the most searching test of its soundness.

In the first section which follows a contrast is set forth between two strikingly opposed views of the basis of political rights and duties, both of which have had vogue throughout centuries, and then an endeavor is made to state a theory which will contain the truth of both the opposed positions without the exaggerations which led advocates of the opposed theories astray. This constructive statement leads to an examination of the moot point of the relation of might and right. In the second section a treatment is given of the concept of sovereignty, again developing the historically opposed views, endeavoring to understand their motivation, and showing the consequences of ethical pluralism for a theory of sovereignty. Special emphasis is laid upon the international bearings of this concept, because of the present acuteness of international problems. And then in a brief concluding section, an effort is made to bind together the various points as related aspects of a consistent pluralism.

I

Historically, political theory has alternated between two suppositions. The tradition which has in most ages enjoyed most favor has looked to some ultimate moral principle as the final court of appeal in conflict between men and nations. This tradition finds expression in the stoics, in the great body of political teaching in the Middle Ages, in Grotius and Pufendorf, in Locke and the whole contemporary reaction to the maligned Hobbes, in most of the moralists who approach the problems of conduct from the religious angle. Sometimes this appeal to ultimate principle is in reality merely a firm insistence upon the finality of some particular body of positive law, in which the established values of some group or class are defended. Thus for example, the common law in England or the federal constitution in the United States has been appealed to by various advocates of the old order from the days of Edward Coke to those of the National Security League. But such appeals are enthusiastic rather than scientific or philosophical, and are intelligible only in the light of the curious political situations in which they emerge. That is, a particular body of positive law becomes enthroned as sacrosanct when it is imperiled by sweeping changes in the structure or policy of government, and becomes a rallying point upon which liberals like Edward Coke or reactionaries like the National Security League may assemble. The dominating tradition in

political philosophy is, however, a much more profound and more significant position than the transient efforts of those who find some cherished values of existing society threatened by attacks from dangerous external sources. The attempt has been made to get back of all existing bodies of law to a criterion by which even the best of them could be weighed in the balances and by which most have been found woefully wanting. This ultimate standard has often been called "the law of nature." Always it is regarded as universally applicable to all men in all places and at all times, immutable in its superiority to all enactments of human or even divine legislators, rational in its provisions which serve as the major premises of syllogisms whence all moral and political maxims may be deduced. This ultimate standard forms the proper basis of all social relationships and organizations, and gives those rulers and citizens who follow its dictates the only valid assurance of just and honorable living. Treated from the idealistic point of view, this ultimate standard becomes, as is also conspicuously true in the case of medieval realism, a part of the framework of the universe, a genuine aspect of the nature of things; it is not only normative for the actions of men, but somehow structural in the very being of the spiritual world; it exists as a real substantial and supernatural principle apart from all human art and reflection. But this logical realism, this ontologizing of the final moral standard, however characteristic of some historical expressions of this political tradition, is not indispensable to it. Ideals, in order to be supreme, do not necessarily have to be objectified into an external order which we would approach and study as we would approach and study the physical constitution of things. But throughout this political tradition, ideals are at least ultimate, fixed, and unquestionable. Most men have been quite willing to appeal with Antigone to "the unwritten laws whereof no man knoweth whence they come."² The criterion may well be considered apart from metaphysical and logical questions, simply as the standard supreme above all men, depending upon no enactment, subject to no legitimate exceptions, imposing upon all an obligation to obey its prescriptions. Such a criterion serves as a powerful agent of reform, and enlists strong loyalties and deep enthusiasms. That this orthodox tradition is still a live and vital political force can easily be seen by referring to the great and inspiring speeches in which is expressed the purpose for which the United States entered the Great War, to the effusive acceptance speeches of presidential candidates, to a multitude of newspaper editorials, to the sermons of countless ministers of the gospel.

² Sophocles's *Antigone*, lines 456-457.

The other and opposing political philosophy, though it too is found in almost every period throughout the whole history of human thought, is not so much a tradition as a series of realistic protests. It has seldom enjoyed popularity, but constitutes the vigorous and bold criticism of non-sentimental minds who disengage themselves critically from the sympathies and intimate kinship of their fellows. With Thrasymachus they cry out that justice is but the interest of the stronger. They repudiate the conventional codes and the professed standards as alike inventions of the weak to rule the strong. They prefer *realpolitik* to pious maxims. They find no objective moral order in the universe, but only a struggle in which they intend to succeed. Hobbes is the great name in this class of political thinkers, and it is safe to say that never have his insight and his wisdom been equaled by his predecessors or followers. Usually the social and political "realism" which writers of this tradition maintain, is much more crude than the skilful teaching of the *Leviathan*. And when one finds an author like Machiavelli or Nietzsche who shows discrimination and intelligence in his frank and open realism, one finds also that this author is misinterpreted and abused by his contemporaries and by his historians. The political realists always seem, as did Hobbes and Spinoza to the pious Locke, "justly decried names." They usually draw down upon themselves the same universal condemnation which Thrasymachus received at the hands of the friends of Socrates. And in its cruder form realism probably deserves to be thus reprobated. The fundamental idea of realists is that of the exercise of power, of the impossibility of substituting moral sentimentalities for the force of manly assertion and vigor, of the dependence of law upon the will of those competent to define the law. The only "law of nature" is the struggle for existence, which of course since the time of Darwin has had the reinforcement of much biological material. Success in this struggle must be won at all costs. The weak must give place to the strong. The ignoble must make way for the noble, and the noble are the survivors of the hardest contest. Duty is to oneself, to the impulse to achieve mastery, to the desire to attain self-assigned goals. Against the traditional sanctions of religion and custom, the virile man will put the might of his own triumphant determination, and woe to those who present themselves as obstacles in his stern pursuit of his chosen career. Force rather than law is the ultimate sanction of good conduct; and force is to be used, not so much to fulfil the law of nature as to create a novel and man-made law. Power is its own justification, and there is no sin but failure. That this realistic position is still the determining factor in many contem-

porary events is quite evident. The realistic principle is practised even more than it is preached; and for every Bernhardt we can find a dozen D'Annunzios. Our modern world seems at times to be one huge Fiume. Imprisonment for honest conviction, deportation of "radicals," expulsion of minorities from legislative bodies, the threat of a general strike, all these demonstrations of major power, even though they may be rationalized as in accordance with a supreme moral standard, are indications that various parties are resolved to make their will prevail by the weight of legal, or even physical instrumentalities, to create a moral standard by compulsion. Where a cloak of legality can be maintained, so much the better; but the cloak is worn rather thin, and in emergency is frankly discarded.

The only hope of effectively settling the issue between these two opposed types of social and political philosophy is in a factual approach on the basis of the human goods which men may make the end of their activities. As long as duty or obligation is the fundamental moral or political concept, no resolution of the issue is possible. But if duty is defined in terms of the pursuit of goods, then an experimental test is found. In what way can the greatest human excellence be realized? To what extent is there a final and fixed principle or set of principles to serve as a guide in realizing this excellence? What place may, nay must, force play?

On the one hand, the former tradition fails to take account of the pluralism of goods. The unity which men introduce into their own living is a practical achievement, not a theoretical monism. There are many predicaments in which men must arbitrarily select some and reject other goods, without thereby imposing upon all the necessity of a similar choice. Of course the goods of life can not be treated as atomistic entities. Rather they are altered in moral quality by the groupings in which they stand and the relations which they bear to other goods and bads. None the less, however much we may be satisfied personally with our own hierarchy of goods, our own integration of values, we can not legitimately read that hierarchy and that integration into the nature of the universe. Though a wise man will find that reflection in a difficult situation will enable him to find the unique good which the situation is to have *for him*, there is not therefore a unique good absolutely and objectively and apart from the personality, temperament, purposes, and interests of the person involved. The wise man ceases to brood upon the goods he has sacrificed, and concentrates his efforts upon, and finds his happiness in, the goods he has selected. But others may legitimately choose differently, and be equally justified in their choices. Two men may, and in-

deed often do, make opposed integrations of values, resolving the moral dilemmas they face in contrary ways, and unifying the pluralism of goods by utterly unlike programmes. The contrast between the diverse variety of possible goods and the achievement of moral unity has sometimes been viewed as that between appearance and reality; but unfortunately for the happiness of most men, the variety is only too real and the unity rarely attained. The contrast is rather, to borrow a Greek distinction, that between nature and art. The pluralism is given, the unity is to be won. And it is as foolish to suppose that there is but one form of unity, as to suppose that a block of marble could be fashioned into but one sort of statue. Under the chisel of a Michelangelo a stone rejected by another may become a David of surpassing beauty. But it might have become still other things than a David. Even if there is not a vague and indeterminate potentiality in all situations, even if moral and social facts exercise strict and unchangeable limitations upon future developments just as do the physical materials of our world, yet the potentialities are usually plural. And because of these plural potentialities there is real contingency, there are real alternatives. Thus there is something which we may fairly call arbitrary about the moral life, something irrational. The just man will be under necessity, first, of introducing order where he found none on the basis of an arbitrary choice, and then, since the most individualistic must needs seek at least some of his goods through social or communal activity, of compromising enough with his fellow men to get the bulk of his chosen ends fulfilled. The same is true of the just state. The final principles and the ultimate standards of all moral and political codes must then be some person's own selection or some group's own selection, final only relatively to some personal loyalty, ultimate only relatively to some chosen end.

On the other hand, the "realistic" protest against the supposition of eternal principles is in its extreme statement most unsound. Mere force is non-moral. However much pluralism points out the arbitrary element in the moral life, it stands irrevocably opposed to utter license and dogmatic petulance. Things are not made good by being desired. Things are not made good by becoming the goal of a strong man or a powerful group. Even if justice were provisionally defined as the *interest* of the stronger, it could not be defined as the *will* of the stronger; for the stronger could not by mere will make what he willed to be his own real interest. Goods are always human goods. They are discovered as good quite as objectively and obviously as other things are found to be square or heavy. Human goods fall within the limitations of the natural

conditions which support human life and make its continuance possible. Human goods would not be the goods of angelic beings, nor of demoniacal beings. If men became demons, our human goods might possibly become their bads, and our bads their goods. But the quite sufficient answer to this is simply that men happen to be men and not demons. Success in achieving one's goal is not justification of the goal. Rather the goodness of a goal would alone furnish the justification of success. A man may arbitrarily select his end when several incompatible goods are offered to him; but he can not by act of will alter the nature of human goods and the consequences of human actions. A man may make evil his end, but it will not thereby become a good end, no matter how much force he exercises, no matter how persistent he may be in his efforts. The basis of morals lies in the actual conditions of human life, which are given in the nature of the real world; and no man and no nation can any more alter the natural distinctions between goods and bads, which result from those conditions, than they can square the circle or transform poisons into foods.

The conclusion to which I have been working is evident in the light of the observations of the last two paragraphs. That conclusion is that the moral life is primarily a problem in successive adjustments. Neither the supposition of eternal principles nor the realistic protest is sound. Both are overstatements of one or another aspect of the facts. No principles are eternal and immutable, universal and absolute. There is no one objective criterion, but rather there are a number of alternative criteria. Thus there will be constant need for reconciliation, for compromise, for working agreements. There will be no means of settling the issues which are bound to arise between advocates of different and opposed programmes of action except either brute force or mutual adjustment. Brute force will always have to be in the background of social and political problems, since there are some values which we cherish so profoundly that for them we would defy the world and would rather perish fighting than survive in peaceful compromise. And when that kind of a case arises, there is no reason which forbids the sublime courage of unyielding loyalty. But more often a way can be found to social adjustment. As an individual selects among the pluralistic goods offered to him in order to be able to get more than random drifting would secure, so a group will arbitrarily adjust the various selections of its members in order not to be disrupted by violence, in order not to permit its members to thwart each other and exhaust all the energy of the group in inner strife which may well be needed against common external dangers. These groups will in turn need to adjust their

enterprises to those of the groups about them, to the inclusive national group in which the lesser groups live. And the nations are faced with the problem of finding a basis of adjustment or else incurring almost certainly a mutual destruction and a common doom. Right will not compromise with wrong, except as a sort of temporary truce in preparation for a future renewal of the contest; but the alternative rights may well work out compromise agreements which will enable them for a long period of time to avoid friction and work in neighborly fashion to their respective goals.

Thus the implications of ethical pluralism for political philosophy seem to be the sanction of both compromise and the use of force. These two expedients for settling differences between individuals and groups are in such general disrepute, however, that another word of defense may be advisable. In the first place, compromise is not here used to include the lowering of one's moral standards in the face of temptations. Only too often our passionate natures lead us to sacrifice some great good for some vicious satisfaction, for greedy gain, for evil end. It is as true as it is unfortunate that men do deliberately seek the bad at times. *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*. Compromise as the turning from good for some seductive evil can be unqualifiedly condemned. But such is not what has here been meant by compromise. Rather I have used the term compromise to indicate mutual adjustment of rival and incompatible goods, the integration of competing social programmes zealously and worthily held by persons or groups who must operate within the same social *milieu*. Destroy one another they might; but surely such destruction is an unmitigated evil. The only alternative is that of finding a basis for joint action which enables both persons or groups to work towards their cherished goals without thwarting the other. Compromise in this sense might indeed be hailed as the social virtue *par excellence*. It is a vital necessity in any world where personal contacts are as close and as intimate as is the case to-day. It becomes itself a good, not simply instrumental, but intrinsic. The finding of a *modus vivendi* is often the very secret of happiness. And in the second place, the use of force is not under all circumstances to be disparaged. Force is good or bad relatively to the function it is made to serve. Though it is true, as is so often said, that might does not make right, it is also true that might alone is at times able to enable a cherished right to prevail. Without might, not simply would the seeking of goods be thwarted by many a deliberate choice of evil ends, but also a new and unique, a fresh and perhaps promising, selection among heterogeneous goods would almost certainly be overpowered

by convention and social habit. That is, however natural and objective goods may be, the requisite conditions for the achievement of these goods include the use of force, either personally exercised, or, in the case of goods which must be sought socially or cooperatively, communally exercised. Hobbes overstates the point when he writes that "power irresistible justifies all actions, really and properly, in whomsoever it be found";³ but no choice of noble ends, no resolution to seek worthy goods, will be effective without power. Either morals are an affair of pious sentiment and subjective wish, or they require energetic and forceful pursuit, with the employment of whatever weapons may be found suitable to the end in view. Right can not certainly be defined in terms of the might essential to success; but right is dependent upon might for success.

II

The implications of ethical pluralism for political philosophy have led to a recognition of the validity of both compromise and the employment of force. But the employment of force, as discussed up to this point, has been left intentionally ambiguous, including both the employment of force by individuals or groups in the interest of their individualistic selections of goods, and the employment of force by a superior power to bring about the integration of other persons' rival selections of goods. These two kinds of the use of force now need to be more carefully distinguished. The consequences of their employment are very unlike, and, in order to pass judgment upon the relative advisability of their employment, must be examined. The former kind is more frequently met in international affairs, the latter kind in disputes arising within a national unit. Yet either kind may be met in most any area of human activity, and their ordinary location is not essential to their understanding.

We have had in the Great War a striking example of the results of the former type of employment of force on an unprecedented scale; and the results are universally deplored. In such tests of endurance and destruction, each side is all but ruined, and the alternative selections of goods (if we generally let it be assumed that the war was a clash between rival selections of goods) are both alike made almost impossible of realization. Compromise would have been better for the victor as well as for the vanquished, though no authority capable of compelling compromise existed. Many a man and many a group, after a forceful insistence upon some chosen goal at all cost and at all consequences, may wish that less resolution and more pliability of temper had guided their contacts

³ Hobbes's *English Works*, Molesworth edition, Vol. IV, p. 250.

with rival men and groups. Of course no one can dogmatically assert that force, exerted not to compel compromise but to enforce a chosen good end, is always mistaken even when the price to be paid therefor seems disastrously heavy. For as was mentioned above, the incommensurability of goods and the consequent arbitrary aspect of moral standards prevent us from reprobating the person or group who holds out for his chosen goal to the bitter end. Provided that the discomfiture of struggle in the face of heavy odds is willingly borne by those who resort to force, there seems to be no principle by which such assertion of force can be shown to be morally wrong. There are some things so sacred to individuals and to nations, that no legal restrictions can be observed, no treaties can restrain, no international power can be recognized even if created to deal with just such issues. Better at such times are failure and extinction than compromise and survival. To insist upon one's right to condemn the resolute determination of others in carrying out their moral standards is to commit the same kind of an arbitrary act, and to put one's own standard forth as absolute much as others had put forth theirs; and thus one would but emphasize the fact that all such condemnations were but relative to some other selection of goods or some other choice of ends which the critic has made in antagonism to those criticized.

Granting so much to those who decline all compromise, we may leave them aside from further consideration, and examine only the employment of force to compel compromise between contending parties. It has been found true that most issues are not worth the cost of bitter opposition. Half a loaf is better than none. Refusal to compromise would lead to Hobbes's war of all against all, and would destroy the possibility of all achievement altogether. Thus we are led inevitably to a consideration of sovereignty, which is the dignified name for authority or power to compel peaceful compromise between rival persons and groups. The need of sovereignty is apparent upon the basis of ethical pluralism. The justification of sovereignty is the fact that more goods are available in an ordered society than are available in a disordered society. Better to have a large part of one's chosen goods forbidden than to lose all in a death struggle. Force used to compel settlement of conflict by an integration of ends is better, in the opinion of most people, than force used in passionate and daring revolt. But sovereignty is a concept which has been the cause of endless discussion; probably no other concept in political philosophy has been so frequently and profusely handled since Bodin and Hobbes forced it to the fore nearly three hundred years ago. Sometimes sovereignty has been held to be a legal term descriptive of certain

facts; and at other times it has been held to be a moral term implying certain rights and duties. But always it has been confusing and confused. None the less it is essential for any political philosophy. I shall endeavor to deal with it under three heads, taking up first various facts to which it points, secondly various theories as to where its locus should be, and thirdly some of its consequences for internationalism.

1. Sovereignty as a fact of political organization is apparent on all hands. The machinery of government may serve many a positive function, carrying on certain public enterprises and providing certain common needs. But at least it among all other functions must have the function of compelling peaceful settlement of differences, of providing the instrumentalities of harmonizing various group interests, of ordering the life of the many persons over whom the government exercises authority. The public nuisance of trials of force are so great that unless a sovereignty prevents their occurrence it ceases to remain sovereign. The sovereign powers may not deem it always expedient to determine some specific compromise for every divergence of interests; but it at least must restrict the degree of violence which contending parties may utilize and the forms of expression which that violence may assume. The very revolt against a particular sovereignty is usually not an effort to abolish all sovereignty, but an effort to create an alternative sovereignty to replace the old. The principal consequence of the existence of sovereignty is to make it increasingly inadvisable to resort to demonstrations of power to settle minor issues.

None the less, it is often difficult to tell, in examining a given society, just where sovereignty resides. Occasionally it is largely concentrated in the hands of one prince who seems to have the power to do about as he wills. But it is doubtful whether sovereignty is ever entirely absolute, since even the most autocratic rulers have found that they dare not go beyond certain limits of their subjects' endurance. More usually, as we look back over the course of history, we discover that in each successive political order there have been a number of offices or institutions which have had certain powers in certain realms within which they were able to carry out programmes and determine policies as they preferred, but beyond which they had no great influence or authority. Many nominal "sovereigns" have been mere puppets with little real sovereignty; and many common men and unofficial bodies have regulated the lives of thousands. In democratic governments the people, or the majority of the voters, may be considered theoretically sovereign; but practically the "popular will" which rules is determined by many another consideration than the decision of the

ballots at the polls. When we get back of the definitions of the locus of sovereignty which we find in constitutions or laws to the actual ability to exercise power and compel obedience, we find it most difficult to determine the real locus of sovereignty. If every difference between contending factions were pushed back to a final settlement, we should discover by the outcome who was sovereign; but such is almost never the case. Rival claimants to power are seldom willing to hazard the limited powers they are sure they possess in order to find out how much further their power may hold; and so they come to a voluntary compromise to avoid the gamble of open struggle. Not often can one claimant establish his complete sovereignty by compelling his rivals to come barefoot to Canossa.

The difficulty in locating the seat of sovereignty is due partly to the fact that it is not stable. Seldom does sovereignty remain in the same hands during two successive tests of power. Every social organization rests upon a good deal of latent anarchy, upon smothered fires of protest and potential might, which, though not usually exercised because of the indifference or cowardice or ignorance of its possessors, asserts itself at unexpected moments and changes the relative status of the contending parties. Sovereignty fluctuates in each new social crisis. Any declaration of a balance of powers is but a truce during which the powers so balanced seek for reinforcements to change the balance of powers into a preponderance of power in their own favor. Successive compromises, successive settlements on the basis of force, successive determinations on the basis of mutual convenience, all these are of frail nature, are doomed to certain extinction, are soon made obsolete by new issues, new laws, new constitutional definitions, new class influence, new trials of force. Political organization, like biological organisms, grow, become diseased, regain health, linger on uselessly, and die. The very abject surrender at Canossa may be but a clever trick to prevent permanent ruin; and more than once has a Gregory VII died in exile and a Henry IV temporarily triumphed.

None the less, though sovereignty is difficult to locate and changes from hands to hands, it is essentially indivisible. When the principle of divided sovereignty has been defended, the discussion has clearly been about something else than sovereignty. There can not be a number of courts of last appeal. The principle of divided sovereignty may be meant to teach that it is often possible to find a basis for compromise without compulsion by a superior authority, or that many types of group contact may lead to no serious clash, or that men do not need in every case to be coerced

in order to enter into coöperative enterprises. Though Hobbes saw human nature truly when he stated that all mankind manifest "a perpetual and restless desire for power after power that ceaseth only in death,"⁴ he was wrong in interpreting the desire for power to be wholly selfish, to be centered upon the sensuous pleasure of the individual, to be altogether egoistic in aim and purport. In other words, sovereignty does not need to manifest itself in every phase of human activities. Nevertheless sovereignty means the power to compel submission to social discipline, to force an integration of ends which will admit of social operation, to subject personal desires to social control. The coexistence of equal powers by two Roman consuls would not mean that there were two final authorities, but either that no issue had arisen to test the seat of sovereignty, or that both officials were creatures of a hidden sovereignty. When crises arise which demand some strong arm to force settlement, it does not help to be told that a number of arms have each a bit of power. When sovereignty means final authority, divided sovereignty is a contradiction in terms. When one is seeking a principle for settling critical issues, an offer further to unsettle the issues by introducing several more contending factors is hardly helpful.

It is perhaps worth while to dwell on the indivisibility of sovereignty a bit further. It has often been said in criticism of the supposition made so commonly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of a state of nature which through the social contract gave place to the state of political society, that neither of these states ever existed in its purity, and that what we find in our study of history is a series of social organizations which lie at various points between the two extremes. It is a valid criticism; for the historic states are all combinations of a certain amount of unorganized chaos and a certain amount of authority, approaching, now the anarchy of a state of nature, and now the absolutism of a state of political society. Is it not possible to say also that neither of the extremes would be desirable? Under the former, every difference of personal or group choice would lead to serious friction, and rampant individualism would defeat its own purpose by making all choices of alternative goods alike precarious. Under the latter, the spontaneity of life would be crushed, the constraining weight of officialdom would destroy all fresh vital impulses, and the whole absolutistic structure would arouse an ever-increasing force of sullen protest which would be bound to lead to eventual overthrow. Only a state in which every person was in complete and violent conflict with every other would justify absolute power, and absolute

⁴ Hobbes's *English Works*, Molesworth edition, Vol. III, pp. 85-86.

power would but produce complete and violent conflict. But absolutism and the indivisibility of sovereignty are two quite different things; and though Hobbes, who first in modern times emphasized sovereignty, also happened to be an absolutist in his politics, there is no reason for confusing the two theories. Sovereignty in each issue which arises must be one; but the same power which decides certain issues need not be, and seldom is, the power which decides all. Yet it will not do to lay it down as an axiom that certain issues concern a different sovereignty than other issues; for the exercise of sovereignty will depend upon the given alignment in each situation, and what authority can make itself obeyed is a simple matter of fact and not a matter of theory. The whole supposition of a divided sovereignty is based on a wish that people would settle more of their issues by voluntary compromise without the need of compulsion by competent authority. But the wish is more pious than a corresponding supposition would be sound; and hence the theory which mistakes the wish for the truth of the corresponding supposition is not exactly adequate.

2. In the light of these considerations about the actual facts of sovereignty, it is interesting to turn to the political philosophies in which in modern times sovereignty has been discussed. Clearly these philosophies are to be classed as so much propaganda. They are endeavors to secure the recognition of some aspirant to sovereignty rather than a description of existing alignments of power. They are attempts to put through some cherished integration of ends rather than objective interpretations of an actual order. Filmer's insistence upon the sovereignty of the king of England was motivated by the hard and cruel fact that the king did not have the power which Filmer wished him to have; and his work on *The Necessity of the Absolute Power of all Kings* (1648) betrays quickly that the necessity existed only for those who wanted to achieve a particular order different from what was actually given. Harrington's theory of the sovereignty of the people was surely propaganda in the time of the Cromwellian despotism. Locke side-stepped on the whole issue of sovereignty, evidently hoping to substitute the law of nature for the exercise of all force; and his treatment of the relations of the executive and legislative powers which defended the order existing in 1689 baffles any attempt to determine which he considered to be the supreme and final authority in cases of conflict. But conflicts did arise, and the ensuing two centuries in England produced advocates of many different solutions. Bentham and many another "radical" would put sovereignty into the hands of popular majorities. Stuart Mill would put it into the hands of the people as they were led and directed by the wisest of

their own number. Burke would put it in the established institutions of government as they were defined in their respective functions and powers by such a treatise as that of Blackstone. Godwin would make each man his own sovereign, and the socialists would subordinate every man to some rather mythical sovereignty called the "state." Thus one does not have to go outside England to find representatives of nearly every conceivable programme of political action.

Surely these philosophies are, however, nothing but programmes, programmes of action, programmes which their advocates hoped to help realize by describing them eloquently and treating them as if they were already realized. Taken as pieces of political propaganda, these different and opposed philosophies are intelligible, their motivation is clear, their moral significance is evident. Taken as attempts to discover some metaphysical entity, a sovereignty which is not the particular sovereignty of their own day and generation, but which exists already and eludes capture, which would, if captured, be a priceless treasure, they are confusing. Historians have abused the political philosophers of England by making their moral programmes into descriptions of some mysterious essence, a sort of philosopher's stone, and have reduced the fascinating story of keen propaganda into as ridiculous a venture as *The Hunting of the Snark*. Sovereignty, as a fact of political life, may please or displease various factions and individuals who find themselves subject to its sway; but no good is accomplished by supposing sovereignty to be something else than it is. It is easy to interpret the subject-matter of the different political philosophers as the skeleton of some plan for improving the social order, for achieving certain cherished ends, for realizing certain human goods. It is hard to interpret their subject-matter if it is supposed that the thing under discussion is the same objective fact or being, seen in so many different places at the same time and in so many different guises. Political philosophy is more concerned with human aspirations than with scientific descriptions of the given order. Viewed as so much aspiration and as so much programme for action, the philosophies of sovereignty are significant human creations; but viewed as successive attempts to locate a metaphysical essence, they are distressing futilities. Sovereignty may be described as it is found, or it may be described as one wishes it were. But if the latter thing is done—and the political philosopher as distinguished from the political scientist attempts to do just that—it is not to be confused with the former. To take a piece of political philosophy and to read it as a descriptive analysis of the data of politics is to make out of sovereignty, not a fact of a nobler order than other facts,

but a dangerous lure which, like the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, leads men on and on until they meet an awful fate in an unknown land far from home.

3. The present critical state of international problems is such as to tempt me to draw certain conclusions concerning them from the criticism just given of the idea of sovereignty. Sovereignty has been defined as power sufficient to deal with competing groups with opposed programmes of action and to force a peaceful compromise; and it is most properly exercised in the interests of the contending parties and of the other parties who would be seriously affected by an open contest of violence. Sovereignty, consequently, must exercise control over an area as extensive as the issue to be settled. For world-wide problems, we need a world-wide sovereignty. Attempts to substitute arbitration will be successful just as far as voluntary compromise is accepted by the contending factions, but no further. It is obvious in the light of the Great War that there are issues which voluntary compromise will not resolve; and it is obvious that we have no adequate power to compel compromise by force, that is, no international sovereignty. We may choose, therefore, between two alternatives. We may permit the "state of nature" and the "war of all against all" to continue in international affairs, striving to be on the winning side, and assuming, though the facts are against us, that the winning side at least will profit from such a social order. Or we may seek to create a sovereignty to which of course we ourselves will have to be subject as well as all others. This sovereignty would not be needed to solve every issue, its very existence would perhaps make its frequent operation unnecessary; but it would be available in emergency.

The great practical opposition to the creation of an international sovereignty to-day is nationalism, that is, the desire to have one's own national state irresponsible and supreme. But to limit sovereignty to national boundaries is equivalent either to a denial that there are international relations which may be productive of conflict, or to the assertion that one prefers rather to have his own nation defy the world in order to obtain its own integration of goods than to compromise. The former alternative is falsified by numerous facts. The latter gives color to H. G. Wells's recent definition of a nation: "A nation is in effect any assembly, mixture, or confusion of people which is either afflicted by, or wishes to be afflicted by, a foreign office of its own, in order that it should behave collectively as if it alone constituted humanity."⁶ The habit of speaking of a national government as a sovereign power is confusing; for though it is sovereign in many a matter, it is clearly

⁶ H. G. Wells, *The Outline of History*, Vol. II, p. 453.

not sovereign when it is itself one party to a dispute which requires either a forceful settlement or a compromise with other parties. The supposition of sovereignty as a metaphysical essence possessed by certain national units is doubtless the reason why the difference between a government's relation to its own subjects and its relation to other governments has not been properly stressed. To call a government which is sovereign in internal affairs also sovereign absolutely would be equivalent to calling a man who was the son of his father also the son of his brothers and children. In so far as claims to the sovereignty of a national state in the settlement of world-wide issues are due to conviction that its proposed programme for the world-wide integration of contending standards and policies is the wisest or the easiest to effect, those claims are an intelligible matter. But most assertions of national sovereignty in international affairs are due, not to heroic resolution to defend a cherished choice of ends, but rather to blatant egoism and irrational pride. Most of what is called "national honor" is only so much national bumpiousness. Just as the theory of the divine right of kings was usually a defense of what T. H. Green well calls "a divine right to govern wrong,"⁶ so the claim that national sovereignty is unlimited in the field where a nation, from the very nature of the case, can seldom be sovereign without bitter struggle, is usually equivalent to the assertion that the nation has the right to act unjustly when it so desires. One wonders how much the motto "America first" is not an insistence that other nations shall not be privileged to criticize America's actions, to hold their own cherished ideals, to receive due consideration in the settlement of world policy. Yet no nation can reasonably hope to be unaccountable. With nations as with individuals, sheer will can not create the goodness of the ends sought, nor determine the badness of all other ends than one's own. Sheer will can not annul the rightness of different choices of pluralistic goods, nor can it repair the harm done by crushing other contending forces when integration and compromise are possible. Thus much nationalism, though put forward as a moral principle, is a cloak for unjustified aggression; and unless it is disciplined by a superior weight of a real international sovereignty, it is almost sure to become the cause of the downfall of human civilization.

I have no desire to malign all nationalism. Nationalism was, in the days when most human contacts were over smaller areas and human conflicts concerned only those who lived within the bounds of one single nation, a powerful force for right, a means of mediation which made possible the integration of diverse interests and

⁶ T. H. Green, *Works*, Vol. II, p. 385.

thus the realization of a greater number of human goods. And it is still, in spite of the widening area of human contacts, a wholesome force within its own realm. Only when it is assumed to be competent to deal with international problems does it become a seed of dissension instead of an instrument of union.

Various arguments in favor of this or that kind of an international order must be understood, like the attempts to determine the locus of sovereignty within a nation, as propaganda rather than as description of existing facts; and their importance lies in their betrayal of the way in which contending parties hope to secure the determination of international policies in accordance with their own choices of ends. Opposition to any and all internationalism is a confession of allegiance to anarchism, a resolution to make might right, a determination to carry through one's own national programme at any cost to oneself or to the world. The offer to enter into an association of nations on the condition that all other nations will agree with one's own definition of international policies,⁷ is utterly idle. It reveals a naïve supposition that one's own principles and ideals are alone virtuous, that right is single and absolute, that obstinate adherence to one's own preference is necessarily heroism and sublime faith. Internationalism is agreement to compromise rather than to risk ruin in combat, which is different from assuming one's own selection of goods to be in accordance with an eternal and immutable principle. No one should expect that the decision of an international order would always be pleasing to oneself; but he may expect that agreement under compulsion will be beneficial in the long run. Of course resistance to constituted authority, when such resistance is worth the cost, would be just as possible under an international organization as under a system of international anarchy; and the fact that it would then be called revolt or civil war instead of merely war would make it no different in principle. But the intelligent policy seems to be to enter into international organization as better than retaining international anarchy, whether such organization offers complete satisfaction to one's own interests or not, to accept check to one's interests when check comes as a temporary matter, to carry on the effort to realize one's own ideals through education and propaganda rather than by violence, to make the international organization rather than open conflict the field of one's endeavors.

III

In conclusion, I desire to sum up my argument. Since goods are plural, since no one selection of goods is authoritative, since

⁷ Cf. *The New Republic*, November 10, 1920, pp. 254-255.

many personal choices can legitimately be made, since antagonism and discord are recurrent and certain, therefore, the requirements of the moral life demand the greatest possible harmonization and integration of rival programmes of action. On the one hand, no single principle of eternal justice is possible; on the other hand, mere force can not create right. Rather it is true that compromise is the sole alternative to violence as a means of achieving human excellence. Since there is an arbitrary element in any moral code, force must always enter into the attainment of our ends. But force need not be exercised always by one of the contesting parties, but may be exercised by a sovereignty, that is, by a power sufficient to compel a peaceful compromise. Definitions of the locus of sovereignty are but so many attempts to direct the course of events to a desired goal, and are all alike legitimate as such. Sovereignty remains, however, essential to peace, wherever it may reside from time to time. And where no sovereignty exists, its creation is, in nearly all instances, the first step to the common good, even of those who are to be most sternly disciplined thereby.

Henry Adams spoke of politics as "the systematic organization of hatreds."⁸ It is such, and in a deeper sense than he intended to convey. He meant only that certain factions seek through political struggle to perpetuate their own rancors; but it is also true that politics is the practical, and as yet the only discovered, means for organizing conflicting and mutually hateful dispositions into a community of peaceful functioning. Such organization does not, indeed should not, always eradicate the hatreds, which to a certain extent are healthful incentives to endeavor. But it permits them to obtain their ends with most order and least harm to themselves and others. The extreme supposition that sovereignty is needed in every issue is contradicted by numerous peaceful compromises every day. The other extreme supposition that sovereignty is never needed is also contradicted most painfully by common experience, and is but the pious hope of unduly optimistic souls. The latter supposition sometimes finds expression in the theory that only the free agreement of free men is properly called sovereignty, and that power to compel compromise should not exist or be recognized in political theory. But if the word sovereignty is preëmpted for the common fact of such peaceful compromise, then some other word would have to be found to denote the other and likewise common fact of refusal to compromise except under the threat of superior power. However much all theorists may agree that mutual and willing compromise is more desirable than the exercise of sovereignty upon refractory parties, yet human society has never been

⁸ *The Education of Henry Adams*, p. 7.

able to get along, and no indication is present that in the future it will be able to get along, without a power sufficient to compel agreements where stubborn persons or groups are inclined to refuse. One overwhelmingly important practical problem before contemporary society is simply whether this truth will lead to the erection of a world-wide sovereignty before the clash of competing forces wrecks still further men's dreams of a better world.

STERLING P. LAMPRECHT.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY.

THE COMPLEX DILEMMA

A CURIOUS volume might be filled with the blunders of logicians. The blunders are not few, and some of them are both amusing and instructive. But there is one blunder that is not amusing, unless the spectacle of human frailty is in itself amusing; and I do not see that it is in any way instructive, unless the advocates of symbolic logic can draw from it one more illustration of the value of their devices. The blunder is an old one—how old, I do not know. I find it repeated in manual after manual that I open, some of them the works of men of distinction and even eminence. No doubt it has been pointed out before, though I do not know where—perhaps many times before; but I make no apology for pointing it out again. For such blunders are amazingly long-lived. We take them over from our teachers, as they took them over from theirs; and we teach them in our turn without a shadow of doubt as to their perfect correctness.

The complex constructive dilemma is described as a form of syllogism, in which the major premise is compound, consisting of two (or more) hypothetical propositions; while the minor is a disjunctive proposition, the members of which are the antecedents of the major; and the conclusion is a disjunctive proposition, the members of which are the consequents of the major. The complex destructive dilemma has a like major; its minor is the disjunction of the contradictories of the consequents of the major; and the conclusion is the disjunction of the contradictories of the antecedents. The two modes are figured thus:

If *A* is *B*, *C* is *D*; and if
E is *F*, *G* is *H*.

But either *A* is *B* or *E* is *F*.

Therefore either *C* is *D* or
G is *H*.

If *A* is *B*, *C* is *D*; and if
E is *F*, *G* is *H*.

But either *C* is not *D* or *G*
is not *H*.

Therefore either *A* is not *B*
or *E* is not *F*.